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1921
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"You're a friend of mine, old pal,
Wise to all my roping tricks—
Have you room in your corral
For this herd of Mavericks?"

MAVERICKS

by

William A. Brewer, Jr.

The Sign of the Pepper Tree
Berkeley, California
MCMXXI

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Little songs, I send you out,
Not with banners, not with shout,
But with just a little sigh
That my mother is not nigh
So that she my songs could hear—
How she'd like them,—Mother Dear!

Little songs, take to your wings;
Pierce swift the heart of things;
Find the path to Mother-mine,
And if she her ear incline,
Sing to her so soft and low—
She will listen, that I know!

Little songs, if you should be
Loved by such an one as she,
Then, indeed, you'd understand
Why, when first your lilts I planned,
Instantly to mind she came—
Why I whispered first her name.

Little songs, go on before;
Be for me ambassador;
Tell her all I told to you
As your lilting rhythms grew—
Told of things I could not write;
Tell her those same things tonight.

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Songs I Have Sung

Songs I have sung
    From day to day
In fun and jest,
    Have passed away.

Songs I have sung
    In other hours,
Of happiness,
    Are withered flowers.

Songs I have sung
    At other times,
Of mournfulness,
    Are only rhymes.

But songs I sing
    In Beauty's praise—
These sing themselves
    Through countless days.

The Sacred Hour

There is an hour
Somewhere in between
The daylight and the dark
When drifting fog
Steals softly in
And veils the crude,
Relieves the drab,
And harmonizes
Things misshapen.
Then outlines made less harsh,
And rich gray tones,
And haloed lights
Reveal true Beauty.

There is an hour
Somewhere in between
The daylight and the dark
That Beauty holds
As sacredly her own.

Little Voices

I cannot do without
The little voices.
Others may have
The diapason of the waterfall,
The thundering bass of the storm,
And the stopped pitch-pipe
That is the felled tree plunging.

Be mine
The little voices—
The rustling of little leaves,
The lisping patter of the rain,
The bumble-bees droning
A clover hymn.

Let mine be
The little voices
Of tiny things,
Beauty-laden.

To Claim Her Own

Beauty does not reveal herself
To open eyes,
But to the heavy-lidded,
Half-awakened,
She gives far glimpses
Down a mirror-bordered aisle—
Faint picturings of her,
Dim-colored,
Lovely.

Nor does she speak
To eager listening ears;
But in the orchestra
Whose symphony resounds
Incessantly around us,
She plays a soft sweet violin
And grips with grace-notes
Hearts that are attuned to her.

Beside us and behind,
Just out of sight,
She waits
To claim her own.

Thinking of Things

Sitting alone in the darkness and
thinking of things,
I can feel little thoughts as they brush
with the tips of their wings—
Thoughts of the things that I lay to
one side in the day,
Things that I only remember when
darkness holds sway—
Things of the senses of hearing and
touch—not of sight—
That are crowded one side by the
damaging hand of the light;
Vaguely remembered faint pictures,
just seen from within;
Things that I dream nor admit to my
nearest of kin;
Songs more distinct than by day, for
the inner voice sings—
That's why I sit in the darkness, just
thinking of things.

Quest

Time was not; and I roamed
beyond the outmost star,
To seek dear Beauty, hidden in
the edgeless round
Of nothingness, that stretched
illimitably far
Beyond; and all at one Time
was; and I was bound.

Fire of Art

When Beauty kindles it,
the fire is glowing;
While Beauty watches it,
the flame is growing
Until it warms the man in
all his members;
When Beauty flees, the red
blaze dies to embers.

Youth Goes Forth

Armed with a glance
For a lance,
Girt with a word
For a sword,
With the shade of an elm
For a helm,
I go forth.

Bearing a tear
For a spear,
Two yellow leaves
For my greaves,
And the suntanned field
For my shield,
I go forth.

Tyranny

I am one
With the hurled spray,
The driven logs,
The drawn tide,
The harried fogs,
The ploughed field,
The flailed grain,
The flung hail,
The blown rain.

I, too,
Am beaten and buffeted,
Driven and drawn,
Flailed and flung,
Under the tyranny
Of Beauty.

Sea-Urge

Ceaselessly the gray surge
Storms against the shoal.
Peacelessly the sea-urge
Stirs a land-locked soul.

Thundering, the gray waves
Boil along the sands;
Wondering, the man craves
Sail-sheets in his hands.

Thickening, the gray skies
Hang and will not break;
Quickening, his heart flies
Out where tops'ls shake.

Bubbling, the gray foam
Sloshes on the shore;
Troubling, he leaves home —
Out to sea once more.

Swingingly the gray deeps
Wallow rolling past;
Singingly his heart leaps—
Happiness at last!

The Yachts

When the Westerlies come freshening down the bay
And the whitecaps all begin their lively dance,
You can see the yachts skim past in full array
With their pennants shadowing their sails' expanse.
Oh, the lucky near-immortal who controls
All the prancings, back and forth, from spot to spot,
(Foiling tides, and veering winds, and hidden shoals),
Of a lily-bosomed, dainty-stepping yacht!

You can steer her with a turning of the wrist,
You can shake her with a clearing of the throat;
She's the delicate patrician of the mist—
The aristocrat of everything afloat;
And no matter where you choose to raise a sail,
And no matter how delightful be your lot,
You are better off when once you've crossed the rail
Of a lily-bosomed, dainty-stepping yacht!

You can have your floating palaces of ease,
With their marble halls and swimming pools to boot;
You can have your throbbing race-horse of the seas
With her pulsing, humming boilers and her soot;
But when you seek the Isles of Free-from-care,
Will *she* hold your course? She certainly will not;
For the only craft afloat to take you there
Is a lily-bosomed, dainty- stepping yacht.

Renunciation

White sails, skirting the land,
White water on either hand,
Blue sky, and blue-shadowed sea—
The sight of these is enough for me!

No more do I ask the heaving deck
Under my feet, and I little reck
Whether on ship-board my cabin lies,
Or on shore—so there's water before my eyes.

I'll plant my feet on the close-packed turf
If I still can hear the sound of the surf;
I'll wander in meadow-grass up to my knees
So long as I smell the salt in the breeze.

Past are the days when I piloted ship
Through breakers and murderous tidal rip;
Past are the days when I ran with the trades
With a crew of hardy adventurous blades.

Now all I ask for is sails of white,
Never a moment out of my sight,
And water unmeasured in front of me—
All that I ask is the sight of the sea.

The King's Highway

Set out, set out, on the King's Highway
When the dawn is in the air;
    From San Diego to San Rafael
    On the path where the padres' footsteps fell,
    Follow the trail of the mission bell
(For now it is smooth and asphalt-gray)
And forget the world and care.

Traverse, traverse, the King's Highway
When the noon is overhead,
    Past Ventura and San Miguel,
    And Serra's resting-place, Carmel,
    Where requiems ring in the breaking swell
And prayers rise in the drifting spray,
As the hours are quickly sped.

Lie down, lie down, by the King's Highway
When the sun is low in the West,
    By Santa Clara's adobe shell
    Or Dolores' snow-white citadel
    And let the evensong dispel
Burdens and troubles that seem to prey,
Into perfect comfort and rest.

San Ysidro Lane

(Santa Barbara, California)

I know a road all bordered down with roses
That winds from San Ysidro to the shore
Where every mallow-scented turn discloses
New vistas of the valley's painted floor.

I have not walked that way and plucked the roses
Or tended driftwood fires by the sea
For years; but if an obstacle opposes
Or troubles press too hard, it seems to me

I see that twisty road between the roses—
Gray shadows on La Cumbra, creeping higher—
The stately mallows, turning up their noses—

* * * *

I burn my troubles in the driftwood fire!

An Invocation

Give the scent of the damp earth
And the wind down a slim white lane;
With a tall tree to guide me,
Send me back on the trail again.

Give me the breeze in the tall pines
As it whispers a soft refrain
To the drum beat of glad feet
That are back on the trail again.

Give me a breath of the salt air
That has strayed from the restless main,
And the packed snow in the dawn's glow
When I'm back on the trail again.

Give me the prize of the long trail
When I'm finished with pack and strain—
Send my spent soul, at the last roll
To set out on the trail again.

Commencement

There are three roads that lead from here
Where flaming poppies grow;
One leads to town, one to the hills,
And one I may not go.

The road to town is paved and smooth;
Its flags no footsteps show;
But oh, it does not hold the lure
Of the Road I may not go.

The hilltop road is winding, rough,
And going, there, is slow;
No so the wonder reaches of
The Road I may not go.

And I must choose my path today—
My destination know;
Oh, would that I might follow far
The Road I may not go!

And either town- or hilltop-wards
I'll take my way; but though
My feet go there, my thoughts will tread
The Road I may not go!

Vita in Morte

There is a solemn hour in the night
When I alone am wakeful in the world;
When sole amid the darkness, my small light
Stabs swordlike at the gathering blackness whirled
In wreaths about a death-encumbred earth;
In such an hour, with sharp and echoing tread,
I walk still streets, and watch life come to birth
Into a silent city of the dead.

Blueness fills heaven's diamond-dusted dome;
Small stirrings spread their ripples through the air;
Dawn's herald shakes his ruby-wattled comb;
Now pulsing Life re-echoes everywhere;
But in that solemn hour of the night,
I, living, leap Death's fettered, battened bars,
And like a true and clear still-burning light,
Seek the communion of the misty stars.

Some Day

Perhaps, some day, I'll be
A bit of the far-flung
spray
Or the out-thrust limb of a
tree,
Or a breath of the breeze—
some day.

Perhaps, some day, I'll be
A fog-bank, chill and gray,
Or a wave in the open
sea—
Or a lightning flash—some
day.

Youth

I have lived so little,
And there is so much
To see and feel
And hear and touch,

So much to love
And so much to know—
I should have been born
An eon ago!

An Inspection

"Heaven, Hell or Hoboken by Christmas."
—A. E. F., 1918

Where have you been,
Overseas men,
Heaven, or Hell,
Or Hoboken?

Have you climbed grandly
Heaven's high steeps
Or have you plunged madly
Through Hell's turgid deeps?

Or have you just waited
In Hoboken
For Fortune to favor
Your luck once again?

Where have you been,
Overseas men,
Heaven, or Hell,
Or Hoboken?

Campus Aspens

(University of California—Armistice Day, 1921)

The campus aspens lay their wreaths today
For Californians, gone from us awhile,
Who sleep abroad, a weary distant mile
From scenes they loved before they went away.
Though we forget them in our work and play,
So quickly grows a tear into a smile,
The aspens tell time by another style,
And so remember where they used to stray.

And thus, upon the paths they loved and knew
The aspens lay their yellow wreaths and red
Where those our fellows trod the grass away.
And every year, their memory is new
Of that dear band of California's dead
Who live again where memory holds sway.

To An Old Book

(The Mysteries of Udolfo: 1764)

I know your gallant knights and ladies fair,
Your haunted castle and your heroine's tears,
Dust-bound and cobweb-chained these many years,
Once charmed my grandmother; for everywhere
Between your leaves are flowers and locks of hair;
But one memento, more than all, endears
You to me; for when all the mystery clears—
I find her handkerchief imprisoned there.

Long since her tears have dried; but still their stain
Exists, a souvenir of sympathy
For her who was as real as life itself;
These tearmarks make them both alive again—
My grandmother and patient Emily—
Though only in my mind and on your shelf.

Smoky Creek Desert

Vastness; the ashen, gray-green stretch
of waste;
Vastness that enervates the softer sight
Perceiving fine in drab as well as bright;
Vastness of ashen dunes, by vastness
graced;
Here, marks of passing time are fast
erased—
Gray sand where once the Smoky
Creek ran white—
The dun sage shrinks from penetrating
light—
Dust blots the pathways wanderers
have traced.

A vulture, floating, tastes the wind for
death
Where carcass-reek rolls up above the
brush;
A magpie whistles warning to her brood;
The basking lizards seem to gasp for
breath;
The heat floods down amid cathedral
hush
And whitening bones bleach on in
solitude.

The God

Sh! Don't tell anyone! I am making a god
Out of a bundle of rags and a handful of sod,
And four pretty feathers I found yesterday on the trail
Torn by a hungry fox from the breast of a quail.

I'll give it a face that is ugly and twisted with hate
(I'll tell all the others that this is the visage of Fate)
And its teeth I will make out of brilliant and water-worn stones;
(If the others aren't good, I will say, it will gnaw at their bones.)

I'll fashion its legs from the long wishing bones of a goose
And when it is finished I'll paint it with blueberry juice,
And then I'll exalt it, and build it a wonderful stand
Where the tribesmen may offer it gifts of the fat of the land.

But always I'll know that the god that I made is but clay—
Something that I can destroy any time of the day;
Rags, and four feathers, and goose-bones, and pebbles and sod—
Sh! Don't tell anyone! I am making a god!

Warfare

In vain the moon has flashed
her scimitar
Against the spider's opalescent
shield;
So now she's launched a
flaring shooting-star,
But still Arachne will no
vantage yield.

Instead, the bolt is glanced off
harmlessly,
And when the tide of battle's
reached its ebb,
The spider's is the victory—
for, see—
The moon's entangled in the
spider's web!

Gray Weather

Festoons of gray mist,
Softly draped from the trees,
Are caught in the twist
Of the afternoon breeze;
Mottled gray skies,
Like guinea-hen's feather,
Watch how dim the day dies
This gray weather.

The gray asphalt street,
Littered thick with dead leaves,
Resounds to the beat
Of the trample that weaves
Patterns of song
From the scuff of the leather
As the crowd drifts along
This gray weather.

Across the gray town
From the wide-reaching moors
A breeze loiters down
With a perfume that lures;
Odors that cling,
And a breath of the heather,
And a promise of spring,
This gray weather.

Envoi

Hardened critics, spare me, pray;
Save and modify your curses;
And perhaps another day
I will pen you better verses!

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